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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W  
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP  
NAIROBI FOR SFO  
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
USUN FOR TMALY  
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SU](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: DARFUR - VISIT OF THE USAID/DCHA ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

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Summary  
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11. (U) From January 20 to 25, USAID Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/DCHA) Assistant Administrator Michael E. Hess visited Sudan. Hess and six USAID/Sudan staff members traveled to North and South Darfur to gain a better understanding of the current humanitarian, political, and security situation. In both states, Hess visited program sites where beneficiaries receive US food aid and access USAID-funded programs that provide economic opportunities, conflict-management training, veterinary services, shelter materials, and other forms of emergency assistance.

12. (U) USAID partners and other humanitarian organizations expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in Darfur, the rising violence against humanitarian workers, and the ever-shrinking humanitarian space. In North Darfur, agencies report that humanitarian access to some areas briefly improved in January, although many rural areas continued to remain off-limits due to insecurity. In South Darfur, the deteriorating security situation is significantly hindering the provision of services to beneficiaries. The December 18 attacks on humanitarian agencies in Gereida and the January 19 arrest and assault on humanitarian staff in Nyala have left many agencies questioning the viability of maintaining a humanitarian presence in South Darfur. In addition, the lack of basic services for the 128,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gereida remains of particularly concern. End summary.

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Windows of Opportunity in North Darfur  
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13. (U) On January 22, the USAID team visited El Fasher, North Darfur, and met with representatives of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and other UN agencies. Each organization highlighted the increasing fragmentation of opposition groups and the resulting inability of the humanitarian community to gain security guarantees previously granted to agencies operating in opposition-held areas.

14. (U) According to humanitarian agencies, security in North Darfur

briefly improved in January, although many rural areas such as Kutum and areas north of Birmaza remain off-limits to humanitarian staff. However, agencies report increased access to Birmaza and northeast Jebel Marra, which had been inaccessible previously. Humanitarian organizations are currently working to obtain security guarantees from opposition leaders before returning to Kutum, following a December 8 attack on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) residence there. The UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported that insecurity has limited the WHO-supported early warning system, although the health situation in North Darfur has remained relatively stable. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) noted that the period of relative security has allowed the agency to work on water services in southern and central North Darfur. UNICEF plans to resume a polio vaccination campaign with other NGO and UN partners. In addition, in January USAID partner Relief International returned to Tawila IDP camp, where the organization provided health services to 34,000 IDPs. (Note: In early February Relief International temporarily withdrew from Tawila due to insecurity, indicating that the security situation remains precarious. End note.)

15. (U) Despite these improvements, insecurity still limits the provision of assistance in rural areas. Some organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and GOAL, are now running rural programs with local staff; however, this approach reduces an agency's ability to effectively monitor and support projects. Due to insecurity, IRC international staff members have not been able to access clinics in rural North Darfur since June 2005. NGOs stated that an increased UN presence in rural areas and UN-negotiated security guarantees would improve humanitarian access in North Darfur.

16. (U) During the visit to El Fasher, the USAID team met with AMIS representatives, who stated that a lack of resources constrains their ability to conduct patrols. The current AMIS protection force consists of 5,207 personnel to cover a 53,000-square-kilometer area. AMIS is also attempting to undertake "quick-impact" humanitarian assistance projects, but currently lacks adequate funds. Hess stressed to the AMIS representatives that the careful coordination

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of these projects with NGOs and donors is necessary.

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Enough is Enough  
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17. (U) In Nyala, the USAID team met with representatives of UNMIS, OCHA, the UN Country Team, and partner NGOs. Agencies reported that security and humanitarian access in South Darfur since the end of the rainy season has deteriorated to unacceptable levels, placing significant limits on the provision of humanitarian services. Increased conflict between Arab ethnic groups in South Darfur has also resulted in decreased humanitarian access in southern South Darfur and increased displacement. Since September 2006, approximately 50,000 new IDPs have arrived in Otash camp near Nyala due to fighting south of Buram, and OCHA believes that approximately 50,000 IDPs may still remain near the area of conflict. However, OCHA reports that even with heightened insecurity in South Darfur, the humanitarian situation remains relatively stable, with no known health crises.

18. (U) In South Darfur, NGO staff members feel a deepening disrespect for humanitarian space by both opposition leaders and the Sudanese government. Direct violence against staff members has dramatically raised the threat level. NGOs are highly concerned about the January 19 incident in which government security officials arrested and severely beat 20 international and Sudanese staff members attending a social gathering at an NGO compound in Nyala. Although NGOs are increasing coordination with substantial support from OCHA, many NGOs are unsure of how to continue assistance in the current security environment and are questioning whether they will be able to maintain humanitarian programs in the state. On January 29, Medecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) announced the discontinuation of their operation in Darfur, due to the mounting level of violence against humanitarian workers.

¶9. (U) Due to its population size, Gereida IDP camp remains a particular challenge for aid agencies. Following the December incident, more than 70 aid workers relocated and most humanitarian organizations suspended their programs. ICRC is currently the only organization maintaining normal operations in Gereida. USAID partner American Refugee Committee (ARC) continues to operate its clinic in Gereida camp with local staff. Of the 170,000 people in South Darfur who did not receive food assistance in January, approximately 123,000 individuals were in Gereida, according to WFP. WFP reports that 70 metric tons of food remains in the Gereida warehouses of its partner Action Contre la Faim. WFP is currently seeking Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) security assurances and strong follow-up action in response to the December attacks before resuming operations in the camp; however, no such SLA actions have occurred to date. ICRC has agreed to assume responsibility for food distribution in the camp as of February 2007.

¶10. (U) The USAID team met separately with the walis of North and South Darfur, who expressed appreciation for USAID's assistance to the people of Darfur. The North Darfur Wali expressed his interest in working on reconstruction and rehabilitation, towards development, as well as support for the eventual returns of IDPs. The South Darfur Wali solicited support in rural areas to encourage the return of IDPs, particularly seed and tool distributions.

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Khartoum Perspectives  
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¶11. (SBU) In Khartoum, the USAID team met with the NGO and UN leadership, including the head of OCHA and the NGO Steering Committee. NGO representatives echoed the security concerns of their field colleagues, adding that insecurity resulting from the Chadian conflict has significantly affected humanitarian operations in West Darfur. NGOs report frequent Chadian and Sudanese military flyovers in West Darfur, as well as a steady flow of IDPs into the Zalingei area of West Darfur as a result of the conflict. NGO leaders are concerned over a perceived Sudanese government attempt to assert greater control over IDP camps, indicated by the Norwegian Refugee Council's departure from Kalma IDP camp. NGO representatives also reported an escalating Government of Sudan "war of attrition" against NGOs in the form of mounting bureaucratic impediments selectively applied to NGO operations. Such impediments include burdensome visa and registration requirements as well as labor regulations.

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¶12. (U) OCHA is working to expand the UN's presence beyond the major towns in Darfur to work more closely with NGOs and increase the protection of civilians. The UN also noted that land issues remain a concern, estimating that approximately 30 to 40 percent of the population may not return to rural areas due to the loss of their land.

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Comment  
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¶13. OCHA has done an excellent job of providing leadership for NGOs and coordinating NGO activities at the country and state level in Darfur. USAID should encourage OCHA's continued coordination with NGOs, particularly as these organizations face increasing security challenges in Darfur. In addition, USAID offices working in Darfur should expand strategic communication efforts to manage beneficiaries' expectations and increase visibility for USAID programs. End comment.

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